2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

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2. Free men are under their elder brother in the first instance, but they may carry their cases to the headman of their village or even to the chief of the country.
3. Slaves were entirely under their own master.[1]

The headmen's subservience to the chief is described in the following passage:

> In all public transactions the headman represents his village. He receives the chief's orders and sees them carried out. When he kills [651] an elephant he sends one of the tusks to the chief. Should he kill twenty elephants he is not expected to give up twenty tusks—two or three would be sufficient. If he shoots a large buck he gives one haunch of venison. For all such tributes he expects to receive in [646 return a present (generally a little powder). . . . He is expected to 593] attend the chief's parliament unless he is under an elder brother in which case he is not allowed to speak, except when especially commissioned. Headmen are expected to report all cases of war, but they [721] often attack enemies without telling their chief beforehand, saying, 'Let him hear of the enterprise when it succeeds.' Yet this is dangerous unless they are sure of success, and well acquainted with the chief's private sentiments. On reporting an attack they present the chief with part of the booty. In times of war each headman when summoned, must follow his chief's flag, otherwise his village is burned [687] down, and all that fail to escape are killed or enslaved.[2]

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Yet within the framework of this organization villages were markedly autonomous. MacDonald's description, which I have just quoted, brings this out very well. Elsewhere he writes: 'The chief may often have less influence than powerful headmen, and we have known cases where he simply contented himself with grumbling when his headmen acted contrary to his desire.'[3] The chief did not differ greatly from his more powerful headmen. A certain amount of ritual in terms of ancestor worship embellished his position, and he had some ascendancy over village headmen to whom he had given land. Yet, in the last analysis, the chief had to rely on his personal following and military power to subjugate headmen who were becoming too powerful. The chief was therefore in direct competition with his subject village headmen, and involved in a constant struggle with them for followers. MacDonald describes how the chief himself was a

[1] MacDonald, *Africana*, i, 155.
[2] MacDonald, *Africana*, i, 157.
[3] MacDonald, *Africana*, i, 155.

that she is tattooed more profusely on the buttocks and legs. The cirdet of beads was formerly made like *mapundo* with a bark-cloth core, called *mbumbo* or *mbulo* (*ku-wula*, to slip off), referring to the *mbulo* being slipped off over the legs. The fashion now is to wear single strings of beads; each string is of one color but all the strings are different and perhaps number a dozen or more.

Lipemba: a bead belt three-inches wide, worn by Yao women near Lake Nyasa. "A bead apron, *lisojwe*, is also worn by them but not near Zomba (Pl. VI, fig. 2).

A woman removes her beads when she is "unclean," that is: (*a*) during the menstrual period, (*b*) during the period of mourning for a near relative when coitus is forbidden, (*c*) before the birth of a child and afterwards until such time as she may resume intercourse with her husband.

A large variety of beads has long been used by the Yao. There are some rarely seen now which were much prised in years gone by, while others are of quite recent introduction. There is no evidence that they themselves made beads and there are few which are probably not of European manufacture.

Clothing. The Yao used bark-cloth before the introduction of woven materials. The older people may still be seen in it and it is used in most of the ceremonies. At one time, they also used to weave a cloth called *likanumbo* from a native cotton plant. This has been given up since the introduction of imported materials.

For the method of wearing cloth, see Pl. II, fig. 2. The very poorest people wear only a strip of calico round the pudenda, held in position by a string round the waist hanging long behind and in front; this is called *mthetha*. Yao women, when menstruating, wear under this a little piece of cloth called *likumbi;* it is only worn at this time and not always as in certain other tribes.

Warfare. Fighting has naturally played a large part in the life of the Yao as among other African tribes, but at no time were these people a trained fighting race. Warfare was of a desultory character consisting mostly of raids by one feudal chief upon another. A party of men belonging to a chief at enmity with another, meeting some of his followers would challenge them, "*Alumbe*, who are you for?" The name of the rival chief in answer was the sign for battle to begin. A fake answer would never be given to gain an advantage. When about to throw a spear, the thrower calls to his adversary.

The Yao have possessed guns for a long time. Going out to fight, the Yao used to leap from one foot to the other, and spin their guns around in their hands. They made their own stocks for the rifles. They also used to make a small, cast-iron cannon about three feet long, called *kambuzi*, "a little nose." It was carried in the arms and was touched off by a torch. Drums called *ngoje* were taken into battle. There is an old war drum at Malemya's village, taken in 1885 by the old Malemya from a Mang'anja chief called Mkuhumbo who lived near Lake Chiuta. Since then, this drum has always gone into battle with Malemya. Around it his men would dance and anyone who had killed a man in battle would run up to it and spit upon it in salutation.